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SECURITY COUNCIL
Forty-ninth year

Letter dated 3 May 1994 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the text of the statement of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, which was presented by the Russian Ambassador to the Netherlands at a meeting of the Administrative Council of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague on 25 April 1994.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 140 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Y. VORONTSOV

* A/49/50/Rev.1.

ANNEX

Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation on the convening of a third international peace conference

The hundredth anniversary of the first International Peace Conference, held in The Hague in 1899 on the initiative of Russia, is approaching. By consolidating the principles of international law, this forum and the subsequent second International Conference, held in 1907, became milestones in the life of the international community. The conventions, declarations and other decisions adopted at the two conferences provided a powerful impetus for the creation of a system for the peaceful settlement of disputes and humanization of armed conflicts, affairs, and placed the problem of arms limitation and disarmament on a practical plane.

Although the Hague conferences were not able to prevent the conflagration of two world wars, they nevertheless were a great undertaking that defined the main thrust vector of international life in the twentieth century: the desire for peace and the affirmation of the principles of justice and love of one's fellow human being.

Today, on the eve of the third millennium, mankind should not miss the opportunity to strengthen international peace and consolidate the legal principles which, in the light of the present multipolar world order, should form the basis of a new global balance. The realization of this age-old dream calls for energetic measures.

On instructions from President Boris Yeltsin, and on behalf of the Russian Federation, which served as chairman of the 1899 and 1907 Hague conferences, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation proposes that all States consider the idea of convening a third international peace conference in 1999.

In putting forth this proposal, the Russian Federation is guided principally by the decisions of the second Hague conference of 1907, which recommended that States parties convene a third peace conference. We hope that our proposal will be received with interest. Bearing in mind the position of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the General Assembly's decision to declare the period 1990-1999 the United Nations Decade of International Law, and similar recommendations made at the 1993 Conference of the Permanent Court of Arbitration.

A preliminary agenda for the third international conference could be as follows:

- improvement of the mechanism for the peaceful settlement of disputes, including the possible clarification or review of the 1899 and 1907 Conventions;

- filling of the gaps in the international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts, and its development;

- creation of a system of international criminal justice with respect to crimes against peace and humanity, as well as other international offences.

If these proposals are supported, the Russian Federation is prepared to submit to States for consideration its ideas on a programme of such a forum, as was done during preparations for the first and second Hague peace conferences. For our part, we are ready to engage in a dialogue on the content, organization and holding of the third international peace conference.

In accordance with the 1907 decisions on the preparation of the conference, a preparatory committee must be established two years before the convening of the conference in order to consider proposals, prepare draft documents and make recommendations on the organization and procedures for the work of the conference. We are prepared to participate actively in the establishment and work of such a body.

The Russian Federation is in favour of the establishment, within the Administrative Council of the Permanent Court of Arbitration, of a steering committee that would put forward proposals relating to the review of the 1899 and 1907 conventions on the pacific settlement of international disputes. The recommendations of the Administrative Council on the work of the steering committee could become a major contribution to the preparations for the third international conference.

Of course, the conference should be organized in cooperation with the United Nations within the framework of its Decade of International Law.

With regard to the venue of the third international peace conference, if the Government of the Netherlands agrees, the conference could, like the two previous conferences, be held in The Hague.

One hundred years is a tremendous historical span, especially in the dynamic twentieth century. Nevertheless, leafing today through old documents of the 1899 and 1907 Hague conferences, one is constantly amazed that, even at that time, such lasting values were established. The note by the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs of 12 August 1898 concerning the convening of the first Hague peace conference is eloquent testimony to the link between that time and our own:

> "This conference could augur well for the coming century. It would unite into one mighty whole the efforts of all States sincerely striving to make the great idea of universal peace triumph over strife and discord. At the same time, it would consolidate harmony among States through their mutual recognition of the principles of law and justice on which the security of States and the prosperity of peoples are based."

How timely these words are for us all even today.